

My semester in the PhD program at Universidad de Puerto Rico Río Piedras had several high points: I got to visit the island and submerge myself in a different culture, improve my Spanish, visit gorgeous beaches in December, teach “Zúmbate”, hear salsa and bachata music everywhere, and fall in love with the coqui frogs, palm trees, tostones, mofongo, mantecado, the San Cristóbal and Morro castles, and Viejo San Juan. That said, there were just too many things that fell depressingly short.

Reasons I did not return to Universidad de Puerto Rico Río Piedras for Spring 2015:

- 1) During the fall, I was not placed in classes that were fitting to my level and therefore repeated Modern Algebra and Linear Algebra. Apparently, even though UPR needed 3 copies of my transcripts, nothing was done with them.
- 2) The department is incredibly disorganized. The first day of class, none of my classes were able to meet because no rooms had been assigned. My Linear Programming class did not meet for the first week entirely.
- 3) My Modern Algebra professor, Heeralal Janwa, was by far the worst professor I have ever had and I am appalled at his classroom conduct. Not only was nearly 30% of what he wrote on the board utterly false, but it was not presented with any sense of clarity. Our Modern Algebra class began with a “review” that lasted until mid-October; that’s two and a half months not making progress! He clearly never prepared for lecture, switched our classroom three times, was frequently late for class, and had an utter lack of rigor. When one of my fellow students emailed him a question of “where is my error in this proof?” his reaction was to forward the student’s email to the entire class and have us vote on if the student’s proof is correct or if the book is wrong, instead of just pointing out the student’s error. One time during class, he did a lot of unnecessary hand-waving and I asked him “If there is no rigor in this, then where is the mathematics?” His reply was “There is none. I do not do mathematics in this class. I am just here to give motivation. If you want to see a proof, the proof is in the book”. I regret not following his statement with the question “Then what is my motivation to come to a math class in which no math is done?”
- 4) My Linear Programming professor, Puhua Guan, canceled class 17 times during the semester. He also was frequently 10 to 20 minutes late to our 50-minute classes and failed to mention several necessary conditions that must be met in order for theorems to be applicable. Necessary conditions are called “necessary” for a reason! So none of the students learned anything.
- 5) My Graduate Teaching Assistantship was apparently supposed to involve proctoring exams. However, I was never given any information about which exams I was to proctor, when they were, where to pick up and administer the exams, or any important details regarding this. There is a huge lack of communication in the department. Everyone I asked about this did not want to be bothered and just sent me to someone else. Any sort of logistical question is answered by being directed to some other office or person, which is almost never the office or person who will answer you.
- 6) Cheating runs rampant throughout the campus. I was informed of undergraduates using the photocopier’s memory feature to obtain and distribute exams before they were given. Not only was academic dishonesty in lower level courses, but also in the graduate math classes. In the Real Analysis class I attended, after it was announced that there would be an exam, a student

(not the teacher) distributed several past exams, assuring others that the professor reuses the questions. If the professor did not say we could use this type of material, it should not be used!

- 7) When I enquired, I was told that a few professors and students attend a Graph Theory seminar. I wanted to attend and sent in my class schedule so that no conflicts would arise. Later in the semester, I was told that I was deliberately not informed of the date and time of the seminar because "It is at a higher level and you might not know all the terms that are used", as if I am completely incapable with dealing with something unfamiliar and too lazy to ask questions or look up terms afterwards in order to prepare for the following week.
- 8) It is common practice to have homework due AFTER the exam that covers that material... because who needs feedback and corrections to make sure they are understanding things correctly?
- 9) My fellow students very rarely spoke to me. And this is not due to any language barrier; I speak Spanish very well and I attended 3 classes that were taught in English (and one in which Spanish was spoken, but everything on the board was written in English). I made exactly 1 friend while at UPR, who probably would not be my friend if I had anyone else to talk to. It was very lonely.
- 10) People insisted on speaking to me in English, even after I'd spoken with them Spanish and said that I prefer practicing my Spanish.
- 11) I was far from my friends and family.
- 12) Getting word of any sort of clubs or extracurriculars is nearly impossible.
- 13) I hate living in a place where I am always told that I can't walk down the street after sundown.
- 14) Too much reggaeton "dancing" and not enough salsa/merengue/respectful bachata/cumbia dancing. I love dancing, but I don't want to be molested on the dance floor.
- 15) Public transit is better than it could be, with the Tren Urbano, but the bus system is severely lacking any sort of regularity. The only consistent aspect is this: the buses stop running at 9pm.
- 16) Traffic laws are more what you'd call "guidelines" than actual rules.
- 17) Why do women in PR insist on throwing toilet paper in the trash can instead of in the toilet?
- 18) UPR's internet connection is terrible.
- 19) Mosquitoes think I am delicious.
- 20) Milk costs \$6/gallon...